

Story #581 (Tape erased)

Narrator: Fehmi Özdemir, at time of taping a prisoner in Sinop Penitentiary

Location: Informant's home in Kabalı village, merkez kaza of Sinop, Province of Sinop

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The Padişah's Son, Little Mehmet, and the Most Beautiful

Girl in the World

Girl -- most beautiful in world

There was once a family with too many children to support, so the wife decided that the next child to be born she would leave somewhere in the woods. When another son was born to her, she took him into the woods when he was only a few days old and left him there

A lioness discovered the child and took it to her den, where she nursed it along with her cubs.

One day, after the boy had grown to be five or six years old, the son of a padişah came hunting in that area. When he and his companions saw the lions, they gave chase to them. All of the lions escaped, but the human child who was with them was captured. The son of the padişah took the boy to the padişah and said, "Father, this is what I hunted today."

The child was unable to speak anything that the padişah could understand, and so the padişah promised a good reward for the person who could teach it to speak. He had all the citizens of the land pass slowly through a doorway so that he could observe them one by one, and from all of these people he selected an old man as the child's teacher.

The old man, who had three daughters, took the child home to live with his family. He named the boy Little Mehmet. They all took turns ordering the child about: "Little Mehmet, bring some water!"

"Little Mehmet, bring some food!" "Little Mehmet, do this!" "Little Mehmet, do that!" He had to do everything in the household, but he never spoke a word.

Tash -- completion of --
to bring reward; failure
to complete -- to bring
education

The padişah had said that he would give the old man forty days to teach the boy to speak. If he was successful, he would be rewarded, but if he failed, he would be executed. After thirty-nine days had passed and the boy had not spoken a word, the youngest daughter of the old man asked Little Mehmet to bring her a glass of water. When he brought the glass to her, she looked closely at it and said, "This water has sand in it!" She threw it on the ground and ordered him to get her another glass of water. When he brought the second glass of water, she again said, "There is sand in this water!" and threw it out again. She did this many times, until at last Little Mehmet could not help exclaiming, "You merciless girl!" The boy was then returned to the padişah's palace, where he became an adopted son of the padişah.

One day the son of the padişah went hunting again. He stopped near a fountain, from which he wanted to drink water. Two women at the fountain were engaged in a lengthy conversation, and so the son of the padişah, not wishing to interrupt them, waited for them to finish talking before he approached the fountain. They talked throughout the day, and then in the evening one said to the other, "Sister, I have not finished telling you what I wish to say. Let us meet here again tomorrow to conclude our conversation." They returned and talked all of a second day, all of the third day, and were still continuing on the fourth day. By this time the son of the padişah

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was so annoyed with their talk that he shot an arrow at one of the women. It broke her water pitcher, and the water ran out onto the ground. Recognizing the person who had done this, the woman said, "Never mind, O son of the padişah! One day I shall cause that palace of yours to tumble down upon your head!"

The next day this woman climbed a tree alongside the fountain. When the son of the padişah came to water his horse, she held out toward him a picture. It was a picture of the Most Beautiful Girl in the World. When the son of the padişah took one look at that picture, he immediately fell in love with that girl. He bought the picture from the woman, paying her the price that she asked for it. As he continued looking at that picture, day after day, he grew ill.

After it was known that the son of the padişah was ill, doctors were called to cure him. Doctor after doctor came to the palace, but all of them failed to find a remedy for the young man's illness. None could discover the cause of his illness. Finally Little Mehmet said to the padişah, "My padişah, I think that I can discover the reason for my elder brother's illness." While the older brother was eating his dinner, the younger one hid beneath the table. Little Mehmet saw his brother take from his pocket the picture of the girl and look at it for a long while. He then reported to the padişah, "Father, I have found the cause of my brother's sickness. He has fallen in love with a girl he has seen in a picture. If we can find that girl for him, then he will recover."

The padişah said, "This must be the picture of the Most Beautiful Girl in the World. I once spent seven years searching for her."

Curse-- for breaking
woman's pitcher at
fountain: Palace
to tumble down

-- Most Beautiful
in World

bro-- falls in love
with girl after
seeing only her
picture

Illness-- caused by
love

-- elder

Brother-- younger

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forty kilosClub - weighing fort 105

Sister -- of Seven Giants "I can find her," said Little Mehmet, who was about eight or ten years of age at that time. "You will have to get me a club weighing forty kilos. The Most Beautiful Girl in the World, with whom my brother has fallen in love, is the sister of the Seven Giants."

The padişah had the club made. Little Mehmet mounted his horse, took the club, and rode to a battlefield. He threw the club high into the air, and when it came down, he let it land on his head. The club was shattered to splinters when it struck his head. This Little Mehmet was very strong because he had been suckled with lion's milk. "Father," he said, "I can not go forth with such a weak club. Please have a stronger one made for me!" The new club was strong enough to suit him, for it withstood the test which had broken the first club.

Little Mehmet and his older brother set out together with their armies, and at the end of the first day they camped on a hill opposite the home of the Seven Giants. In the morning the giants observed the great number of men camped on the hillside. The youngest of the giants was sent to inform them that if these soldiers did not leave at once, the giants would devour that army. But Little Mehmet just swung his arm once at this youngest giant, causing him to run back to his older brothers, saying, "There is a young man over there with whom no one can possibly fight. We shall either have to cut or burn that fellow!"

Upon hearing this, the giant brothers invited Little Mehmet to their home. Little Mehmet said to his elder brother, "They have invited us to their home, where the Most Beautiful Girl in the World will serve us coffee. Do not faint when you see her. Do not

Sister -- of Seven
Giants -- seven --
sister of

Hero -- tests strength
of club against
own head.

human
mursling of --
strong

lioness -- human
mursling of -- can be
defeated and
with fire or sword.

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in... at first
Most Beautiful
Girl World
become excited when you look at her and fall down." But the older brother was unable to control his feelings, and as soon as he saw the girl, he collapsed. Little Mehmet was very cool and showed no sign of excitement.

Cauldron - large -- with
tor handle
Forty 4 on
lus 4000
'andle forty - on
huge cauldron
Giants -- was -- thought
to sea here to
death escape
many have
route
The giants realized that Little Mehmet was the dangerous one and that his brother was quite ineffective. They decided to catch him and burn him that night while he stayed in their home. They had a huge cauldron with forty handles on it. They boiled water in this cauldron and planned to pour boiling water over him as he slept. But Little Mehmet guessed that the giants had planned some piece of treachery against him, and so he decided not to sleep at all. He saw them carrying the cauldron upstairs, but before they could pour the water over him in his bed, he escaped by climbing up the chimney stack. The giants poured the boiling water on the bed and concluded that Little Mehmet had been scalded to death. As for his brother, they said, "We can kill him at any time with one blow on the head."

In the morning Little Mehmet said to the giants, "There were a great many fleas in my bed last night. They bit me so much that I got very little sleep."

The giants were amazed to hear this. They had barely been able to carry the cauldron with forty handles up to the top of the house. That all of that boiling water should affect him only as much as flea bites seemed fantastic. "It seems that we shall not be able to kill this fellow in this manner." They concluded that their uncle, who was a seven-headed giant, would be the only one who could cope

giant -- seven headed

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with Little Mehmet. "Let us take this fellow to our uncle and see what he can do." They took Little Mehmet to an intersection of roads and directed him to take the route that led to the home of their uncle, the seven-headed giant. When he finally reached the home of this giant, Little Mehmet lay down and fell asleep.

As he slept, a girl came to him and said, "Hey, young man! This is the house of the seven-headed giant! If he finds you here, he will eat you."

"Do not be concerned. Let him come to eat me. That is what I am waiting here for. Who are you, anyway?" *Egypt -- Padişah of Egypt -- daughter of Padişah of Egypt*

Abduction of daughter of Padişah of Egypt -- by seven headed giant "I am the daughter of the padişah of Egypt. He [the giant] abducted me from my father's home once during a war, and he has kept me here ever since."

"Well, awaken him and tell him to come here."

When the giant was awakened, he went to Little Mehmet and said, "Young man, you are too young. I do not feel like eating you. Go away! Leave this place!"

"You infidel! Accept the faith or I shall tear you to pieces."

"I have lived a long life without believing in your religion. Do you think that you are going to be able to make me accept your faith now? Let us see you make an attack against me!"

"No, you may make the first attack."

"No," the giant insisted, "you make the first attack!"

When Little Mehmet started striking the giant with his club, he broke him into forty pieces. He immediately cut off the giant's

Giant -- seven-headed -- broken into forty pieces -- by human antagonist
Forty pieces -- fragments into which body of giant broken by human antagonist

Nose -- plus lip and ear -- cut from body of giant killed by 1
Lip -- plus nose and ear
Ears -- plus nose and lip
Giant -- body of -- his nose, lip and ears removed -- by human slayer

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nose, lips, and ears, and he put these in his packet.

In the evening the Seven Giants returned to their home, but there was no sign of Little Mehmet. They thought that he had been eaten by the seven-headed giant, but, much to their surprise, he finally did return. Everyone sat around talking about what he had been hunting that day. "I have been hunting pigeons," said one giant. "I hunted rabbits," said another giant. When it came to be Little Mehmet's turn, he said, "I shot something about the size of a pigeon. Bring me my saddle bag." When the saddlebag was brought, he took out the nose, lips, and ears of the seven-headed giant. "Here are the nose, lips, and ears of the thing which I shot," said Little Mehmet. When the giants saw these, they were terrified.

Snake -- huge -- killed by hero
Later, in another battle, Little Mehmet killed a huge snake that had threatened the entire world. He fought with this snake for three days and three nights, and he finally killed it.

In the meantime, the son of the padişah and the Most Beautiful Girl in the World were examining the first thirty-nine rooms of the palace, but they were not supposed to enter the fortieth room. "There is a seven-headed giant in that room," said the girl. "He has been kept tied there for seven years. This giant is very thirsty, for the bowl of water which is close to his mouth recedes every time that he tries to grasp it. If this giant were allowed to drink, he would have strength enough to break loose. He would then be very dangerous, for he is a flying giant."

Forty room -- last of which not to be entered -- Taboo
Rooms -- forty -- Same as above
Taboo -- fortieth room not to be entered

-- flying --
Giant -- seven-headed -- imprisoned for seven years

Seven years -- at imprisonment of seven headed giant
Water -- drinking of -- to enable seven-headed giant to burst shackles and escape

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The son of the padişah said, "Let us take a look at this giant, too. We have seen so many rooms that we might as well see this last one also before we leave."

The girl said, "My father shackled this giant here. If he is let loose, he will do great harm, and he will also carry me away."

When they entered the fortieth room, the seven-headed giant there said to them, "Do you not want to go to heaven? If you do, then have enough charity to give me just one swallow of water." When the son of the padişah gave him water, the giant took just one swallow and broke loose. He struck the young man down with one blow and then flew away with the girl on his shoulder.

When Little Mehmet returned from his battle with the snake, he discovered what had happened. He asked the Seven Giants where the seven-headed giant had flown. They said, "We have an aunt at such-and-such a place. Perhaps he has gone there."

Little Mehmet wrote down her address, and with this, he finally located the aunt's house. He was told by this giantess, however, the seven-headed giant had passed through the day before. "If I had known in time," she said, "I could have kept him here. From here he went to a cave behind such-and-such mountain. There is a key to the gate of that cave that weighs forty batmans,¹ so heavy that forty

noble women cannot lift it. How could you ever open such a gate?"

On his way to the cave, Little Mehmet came to a wide plain. At some distance on this plain he saw three persons, and he began to

¹ An old measure of weight equivalent to anywhere from 5½ to 22 pounds.

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walk toward them. When he finally reached them, he said, "I have been walking toward you all day long, and all that time you have been arguing about something."

They said, "You have seen us arguing only today, but, in fact, we have been arguing here for the past three years."

"Why have you been arguing?" *Magic objects -- three: skin (flying), fez (of invisibility), and stick (of continuous beating)*

sons "Well, when our father died, he left us this skin, this stick, and this fez. We cannot decide which of us is to have any one of these things." *Three magic objects: same or above*

Little Mehmet said, "I shall make this decision easy for you. I shall shoot an arrow from my bow, and whichever of you finds it and brings it back to me will be the one to have first choice of the three objects. Then I shall shoot another arrow, and whichever of the two remaining brothers brings it to me will have his choice of the two remaining objects. The third one will get the object that is left. But tell me--what is the use of this skin?"

"It is a flying skin," they said, "and it can carry one anywhere he wishes to go."

"And what is the use of the fez?"

"The person who wears the fez becomes invisible," they explained, "and he can go about in any country without being observed."

"And what is the use of the stick?"

"The stick will beat anyone it is ordered to beat."

Little Mehmet then shot his arrow a great distance and told

inheritance -- steals inheritance of three under g. & of dividing among them

*inheritance -- for three sons
three magic objects
Inheritance -- contested by three sons*

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the three brothers to go after it. While they were running after the arrow, Little Mehmet placed the bridle of his horse on the horn of his saddle and said, "Come on, my horse. Wait here." He stood on the flying skin, took the stick in his hand, and put the fez on his head. Then he ordered the skin, "Take me to the cave of the seven-headed giant."

When he arrived there, Little Mehmet examined the huge lock that *hickster -- antler* held the cave gate shut. As he was doing this, he saw the giant *came of giant --* coming toward the cave, but since Little Mehmet was still wearing *by walking between* the fez, he was invisible. When the giant unlocked the gate and *giant's legs while* entered the cave, Little Mehmet entered also, walking between the *wearing fez of* giant's legs *visibility*

Inside, the Most Beautiful Girl in the World had cooked a great quantity of pilav,² and they began to eat it. Little Mehmet also began eating it. The giant said, "Lady, you are eating from that end of the pilav, and I am eating from this end, but who is eating from there in the center of the tray?"

"Perhaps devils," said the girl. "How should I know?"

Of course, Little Mehmet was having a good meal. He was still wearing the fez, and so he was completely invisible.

In the morning the giant flew away again. It was his habit to hunt during the day and return home at night. As soon as he was gone, Little Mehmet removed the fez and became visible to the girl,

² A rice dish with pine nuts, sometimes also currants; it sometimes also contains tiny bits of meat.

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who was greatly surprised to see him there. "Where did you come from?" she asked.

"I have come here to kill this giant. You must tell me the place where his life force is kept. After that I shall free you. When the giant comes home in the evening, you must pretend to be crying. When he asks you why you are crying, tell him it is because he does not tell you where his life force is kept."

The girl agreed to this proposal, and that evening she pretended to be sad and very thoughtful. When the giant noticed this, he asked, "Why are you so thoughtful, lady?"

"Why should I not be? I have nobody to play with here. How pleasant it would be if you would tell me where your life force is hidden so that I could play with it?"

"Could you play with my life force?"

"Yes, of course I could."

"Well, my life force is in that broom," said the giant.

In the morning after the giant had left the house, the girl told Little Mehmet, "His life force is in that broom."

"He was lying to you," said Little Mehmet.

When the giant returned home that evening, the girl said to him, "You have lied to me. Why do you not tell me the truth?"

"Well, then, my life force is in that jug."

"No, it cannot be in that jug. You are still lying."

"My life force is actually in a chest in that room over there."

Inside the door of that room there are two swords crisscrossing each other. Swords - above door - perpetual crisscrossing - a guard external
life force of giant no mobilized only by repetition
secret prayer

Life ^{fallen}
E. Hand ^{and}

Soul -- external
Life source --
external -- o
giant: seven fishes
in a bottle

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other continuously. In order to enter that room, you must recite a prayer which I shall teach you. After entering the room, you will open the chest, inside of which you will find a bottle. My life force is contained in that bottle in the form of seven fishes. If anything is done to any of these seven fishes, I become ill. You must never touch these fishes."

"Why would I?" asked the girl.

On the following morning, the giant departed as usual to hunt. Little Mehmet, who had listened to the entire conversation between the giant and the girl, stopped the swinging of the swords by reciting the prayer. He then entered the room, opened the chest, and took out the bottle in which seven fishes swam about. He caught one of these fishes and decapitated it. Then he decapitated a second and a third,

van fisher -- as
external life force (i
soul -- of seven-
headed, flying giant

leaving only four fishes in the bottle. He looked up and saw that the giant was returning home at noon this time instead of in the evening.

if giant-
by decapitating seven
fish which constitute
giant's external life force
(or soul)

"What is the matter?" the girl asked him.

"I am not well. My wing is broken, and I am limping."

Little Mehmet took another fish from the bottle. The giant

said, "Spare my life!"

"Accept my faith!" said Little Mehmet.

"No!"

Then Little Mehmet decapitated the remaining fishes, one by one, and at last the giant died. Little Mehmet then took the girl with him, climbed onto the skin, and ordered, "Take me back to the

armies here

han

seven headed fly giant

Giant
spared
accept hero's religion
-- to be
he w.

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place from which you brought me." When he arrived there, he found his horse still waiting, and what is more, he saw the three brothers who had gone after his arrow still walking back with it. As they reached the point on the plain where they had started, they began again to argue. "The fez is mine!" said one. "The stick is mine," said another. "The skin is mine," said the third. Little Mehmet divided these three things among them.

returns magic objects to three sons who inherited them -- after using objects on quest of his own

Magic objects -- returned to three sons who inherited them -- after using objects on quest of his own

The Seven Giants said among themselves on the thirty-ninth day after their sister's abduction by the seven-headed giant, "This is the fellow [the son of the padişah] who caused our sister's loss. We might as well tear him to pieces, for if Little Mehmet has not returned in thirty-nine days with her, it is unlikely that he will have her here within the forty days we allowed him."

... gleaming -- of Most Beautiful Girl in the World -- visible from distance of three days' walking

One of the giants said, "If our sister were anywhere in this land, her brilliance³ would be visible to us from a distance of three days.⁴ Let one of us go up that hill and look out for her."

Skin -- gleaming or luminous -- of beautiful woman

One of them climbed the hill, from the top of which he shouted, "Good news! Good news! I see her shining as brightly as the sun! Little Mehmet has brought our sister back!"

Little Mehmet returned and delivered the girl to her brothers. Then he, his elder brother, and the Most Beautiful Girl in the World went to the palace of the padişah, the young men's father. Little

³ In myth and folktale beautiful women frequently have skin which gleams. Among such refulgent beauties are several of the Greek goddesses.

⁴ Peasants often measure distance in terms of walking time between two points.

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Mehmet explained to the padişah, "My padişah, it was I who fought the battles and brought back the Most Beautiful Girl in the World, but your son is entitled to a share of her. We went together, and we should each have a share. We must divide this woman. Bring a sword!"

One man held the girl's right leg and one man held her left leg. They held her upside down. When Little Mehmet was about to cut her into two parts, he simply hit her with the flat side of his sword. She started vomiting, and the semen of the giant passed out of her body.⁵ Then Little Mehmet said to his older brother, "She is yours. I want the youngest daughter of the hoca⁶ who taught me how to speak."

⁵ This starkly realistic note is out of keeping with the fantasy of this tale. Up to this point in the numbered tales of the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative, this is the first time that such a physiological detail has entered a märchen of this kind.

⁶ A Moslem priest. The old man had not previously been so described. Since the hoca in pre-Republican Turkey was both priest and teacher, Little Mehmet may here be simply referring to him as his teacher. Even at this date [1981] it is not uncommon to hear Turkish students refer to a teacher or professor as hoca, the term in that context having no religious implication at all.